EQAO
Education Quality and Accountability Office

Highlights of Provincial Results

April 2003

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, October 2002

OSSLT Supports Quality Assurance and Accountability

- The OSSLT is a quality assurance measure that shows the extent to which Ontario students are meeting the basic literacy standard expected by the end of Grade 9 across the province.
- The OSSLT is designed to assess the reading and writing skills students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.
- Successful completion of the OSSLT is one of the 32 requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

EQAO Sets Standards for Student Achievement and Success

- A student must pass both the reading component and the writing component to be successful on the OSSLT.
- The standard for passing the OSSLT was established by EQAO through a rigorous standard-setting process, which involved a panel of assessment experts, educators and community representatives.
- Meeting the standard means that the student's work shows that most of the time the student can communicate ideas in writing clearly and without errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar and organization that prevent someone from understanding the student's writing. In reading, the student's work shows that most of the time, the student can read and understand information in various formats.

OSSLT Facts

- 136 028 first-time eligible and 33 308 previously eligible English-language students fully participated in the October 2002 OSSLT.
- The OSSLT was administered over two blocks of time, two-and-a-half hours each (including breaks and instructions), one on the morning of October 23 and one on the morning of October 24, 2002.
- The OSSLT was divided into two components: reading and writing.

Highlights of Achievement Results (English-Language)

First-Time Eligible Students

- In October 2002, 72% of first-time eligible students who wrote the test passed both the reading and the writing components.
- A further 4% of first-time eligible students passed the reading component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed reading to 76%.
- A further 13% of first-time eligible students passed the writing component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed writing to 85%.
- The pattern of results for October 2002 is similar to the pattern for February 2002.
- More students were successful in the writing component than in the reading component.

Previously Eligible Students

- 33% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT were successful in both.
- 34% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT passed one component.
- 51% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- 87% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.

Tracking the 2001 Cohort

- After two administrations, 80% of the 2001 student cohort have successfully completed the OSSLT.

EQAO
Education Quality and Accountability Office

HIGHLIGHTS OF PROVINCIAL RESULTS

APRIL 2003

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL LITERACY TEST, OCTOBER 2002

OSSLT SUPPORTS QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- The OSSLT is a quality assurance measure that shows the extent to which Ontario students are meeting the basic literacy standard expected by the end of Grade 9 across the province.
- The OSSLT is designed to assess the reading and writing skills students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.
- Successful completion of the OSSLT is one of the 32 requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

EQAO SETS STANDARDS FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS

- A student must pass both the reading component and the writing component to be successful on the OSSLT.
- The standard for passing the OSSLT was established by EQAO through a rigorous standard-setting process, which involved a panel of assessment experts, educators and community representatives.
- Meeting the standard means that the student's work shows that most of the time the student can communicate ideas in writing clearly and without errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar and organization that prevent someone from understanding the student's writing. In reading, the student's work shows that most of the time, the student can read and understand information in various formats.

OSSLT FACTS

- 136 028 first-time eligible and 33 308 previously eligible English-language students fully participated in the October 2002 OSSLT.
- The OSSLT was administered over two blocks of time, two-and-a-half hours each (including breaks and instructions), one on the morning of October 23 and one on the morning of October 24, 2002.
- The OSSLT was divided into two components: reading and writing.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS (ENGLISH-LANGUAGE)

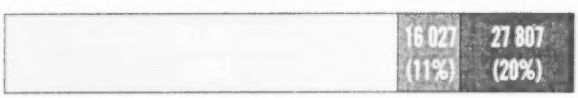
FIRST-TIME ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

- ☆ In October 2002, 72% of first-time eligible students who wrote the test passed both the reading and the writing components.
- ☆ A further 4% of first-time eligible students passed the reading component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed reading to 76%.
- ☆ A further 13% of first-time eligible students passed the writing component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed writing to 85%.
- ☆ The pattern of results for October 2002 is similar to the pattern for February 2002.
- ☆ More students were successful in the writing component than in the reading component.

PREVIOUSLY ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

- ☆ 33% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT were successful in both.
- ☆ 34% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT passed one component.
- ☆ 51% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- ☆ 87% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.

TRACKING THE 2001 COHORT



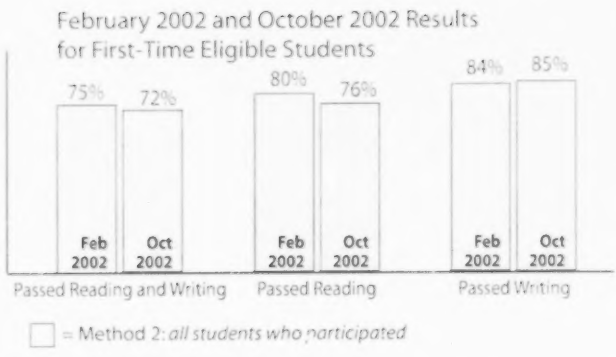
- Successfully completed in February 2002
- Successfully completed in October 2002
- Need to pass one or both components in October 2003

- After two administrations, 80% of the 2001 student cohort have successfully completed the OSSLT.

103-06814/

OSSLT Helps Students Improve

- EQAO has published the *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions* to assist schools in the consistent implementation of Ministry of Education policy. This ensures that schools are meeting the accommodation needs of exceptional students, so that they can demonstrate their skills on the OSSLT. The guide also outlines special provisions available for ESL/ELD students and provides procedures for deferrals and exemptions.
- Schools and boards are required to provide remediation to students who were not successful on the test.
- Students who are not successful on one component will be required to pass only that component on the retake.
- Students who were not successful will have the opportunity to retake the OSSLT on October 22 and 23, 2003.



Using the Results — It is important to emphasize that the OSSLT results should be used to improve teaching and learning; they should not be used to rank schools. Ranking provides no information about why scores are high or low; it invites simplistic and misleading comparisons that ignore the particular circumstances affecting achievement in each school, and it distracts from addressing the more critical issue of how to improve learning for all students.

Overall Key Recommendations

Based on the results of the October 2002 test, EQAO recommends

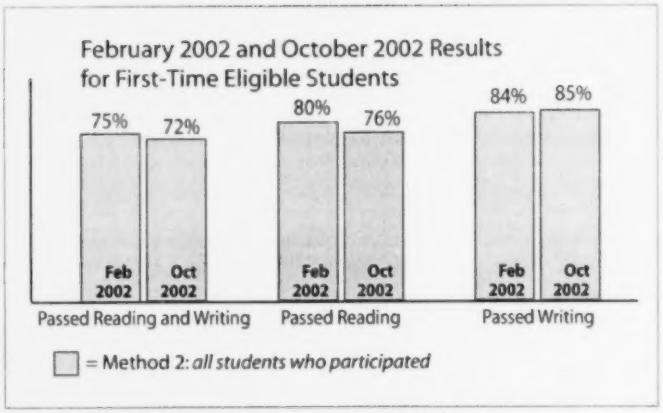
- that **school boards,** in consultation with their school communities, using the *EQAO Guide to School and Board Improvement Planning,* incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing board and school improvement plans for developing student literacy. Boards should implement strategies for improving student achievement in reading and writing that extend across the elementary and secondary grades and across all subject areas.
- that **schools,** in consultation with their communities, incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing school literacy improvement plans and develop curriculum-wide strategies for improving student achievement in writing and, especially, in reading.
- that **teachers** be encouraged to use EQAO's resources to assist students in preparing to write the OSSLT successfully.
- that **parents** enhance their own understanding of the reading and writing skills required for successful completion of the OSSLT and assist students in understanding the relevance and importance of literacy skills to future education and career opportunities, and in everyday life outside school.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer professional development opportunities for teachers in literacy instruction, especially in reading.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.
- that **school boards** encourage their schools to identify and share cross-curricular strategies and practices, in both elementary and secondary schools, that effectively prepare students for the OSSLT.

For more detailed information and results, please visit the EQAO Web site at www.eqao.com

EQAO
Education Quality and Accountability Office

OSSLT Helps Students Improve

- EQAO has published the *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions* to assist schools in the consistent implementation of Ministry of Education policy. This ensures that schools are meeting the accommodation needs of exceptional students, so that they can demonstrate their skills on the OSSLT. The guide also outlines special provisions available for ESL/ELD students and provides procedures for deferrals and exemptions.
- Schools and boards are required to provide remediation to students who were not successful on the test.
- Students who are not successful on one component will be required to pass only that component on the retake.
- Students who were not successful will have the opportunity to retake the OSSLT on October 22 and 23, 2003.



Using the Results — It is important to emphasize that the OSSLT results should be used to improve teaching and learning; they should not be used to rank schools. Ranking provides no information about why scores are high or low; it invites simplistic and misleading comparisons that ignore the particular circumstances affecting achievement in each school, and it distracts from addressing the more critical issue of how to improve learning for all students.

Overall Key Recommendations

Based on the results of the October 2002 test, EQAO recommends

- that **school boards,** in consultation with their school communities, using the *EQAO Guide to School and Board Improvement Planning,* incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing board and school improvement plans for developing student literacy. Boards should implement strategies for improving student achievement in reading and writing that extend across the elementary and secondary grades and across all subject areas.
- that **schools,** in consultation with their communities, incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing school literacy improvement plans and develop curriculum-wide strategies for improving student achievement in writing and, especially, in reading.
- that **teachers** be encouraged to use EQAO's resources to assist students in preparing to write the OSSLT successfully.
- that **parents** enhance their own understanding of the reading and writing skills required for successful completion of the OSSLT and assist students in understanding the relevance and importance of literacy skills to future education and career opportunities, and in everyday life outside school.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer professional development opportunities for teachers in literacy instruction, especially in reading.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.
- that **school boards** encourage their schools to identify and share cross-curricular strategies and practices, in both elementary and secondary schools, that effectively prepare students for the OSSLT.

For more detailed information and results, please visit the EQAO Web site at www.eqao.com

EQAO
Education Quality and Accountability Office

EQAO

Education
Quality and
Accountability
Office

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, October 2002

Report of Provincial Results

English-Language Schools

April 2003

© 2003 Queen's Printer for Ontario
ISBN 0-7794-4404-3 ISSN 1705-6977 (print)
ISBN 0-7794-4416-7 ISSN 1703-9428 (Internet)

Contents

Results at a Glance — First-Time Eligible Students 1
- Highlights of Achievement Results (Method 2) 2
- Key Messages 2
- Key Recommendations 3

Results at a Glance — Previously Eligible Students 4
- Highlights of Achievement Results for Previously Eligible Students 4
- Key Messages for Previously Eligible Students 5
- Key Recommendations for Previously Eligible Students 5

Background 6
- Introduction 6
- Test Design and Development 6
- Setting the Standard 7
- General English-Language Descriptors: Reading 7
- General English-Language Descriptors: Writing 8
- Test Administration 8
- Quality Assurance 9

Participation of First-Time Eligible Students 9
- Program of Study 10
- Gender 10
- ESL/ELD Students 10
- Special Provisions 11
- Students with Special Needs 11
- Accommodations 11

Achievement Results — First-Time Eligible Students 12
- Summary of Results 13
- Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Student Characteristic 14
- Summary of Reading Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Type of Reading Selection, Reading Skill and Reading Strategy 17
- Summary of Writing Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Writing Task 19
- Detailed Analytic Writing Results for First-Time Eligible Students Who Did Not Pass Writing 21

Results from the Student Questionnaire — First-Time Eligible Students 25

Participation of Previously Eligible Students 27
- Gender 28
- ESL/ELD Students 28
- Special Provisions 28
- Students with Special Needs 28
- Accommodations 29

Achievement Results — Previously Eligible Students 29
- Summary of Results 30
- Results for Previously Eligible Students by Student Characteristic 31

Summary of Reading Results for Previously Eligible Students by Reading Selection Type, Reading Skill and Reading Strategy 35
Summary of Writing Results for Previously Eligible Students by Writing Task 36
Detailed Analytic Writing Results for Previously Eligible Students Who Did Not Pass Writing 38

Results from the Student Questionnaire — Previously Eligible Students 42

Specific Recommendations 44
Planning for Improvement 44
Relevance and Student Motivation 44
Reading 45
Writing 45
Support for Teachers 45
Support for Parents/Guardians 46
Diverse Student Populations 46
Previously Eligible Students 47

Results at a Glance — First-Time Eligible Students

Overall Results for English-Language Students Who Wrote the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test for the First Time, October 2002 (publicly funded schools)

Method 1 — First-Time Eligible Students

	February 2002		October 2002	
	#	%	#	%
Passed Both Reading and Writing	97 227	69%	97 459	67%
Passed Reading Only	6 747	5%	5 797	4%
Passed Writing Only	12 209	9%	17 870	12%
Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	12 849	9%	14 902	10%
Absent One or Both Days	5 889	4%	3 991	3%
Deferred	6 140	4%	6 520	4%
Total Number of First-Time Eligible Students	141 061		146 539	
Number of Students Exempt	1 147		1 637	

Method 2 — First-Time Eligible Students

	February 2002		October 2002	
	#	%	#	%
Passed Both Reading and Writing	97 227	75%	97 459	72%
Passed Reading Only	6 747	5%	5 797	4%
Passed Writing Only	12 209	9%	17 870	13%
Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	12 849	10%	14 902	11%
Number of First-Time Eligible Students Fully Participating	129 032		136 028	

Notes:

First-time eligible students entered Grade 9 during the 2001–2002 school year. These students (and others who were placed in this cohort) were required to write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) for the first time in October 2002.

Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

Method 1 provides a percentage breakdown of all students in the cohort who are working toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The only students excluded from the Method 1 percentages are those who were not working toward an OSSD and who were therefore exempted.

Method 2 provides a percentage breakdown of those students who fully participated in the OSSLT. Students are considered to have fully participated if they were present on both days of the administration.

Highlights of Achievement Results (Method 2)

- In October 2002, 72% of first-time eligible students who wrote the test passed both the reading and the writing components.
- A further 4% of first-time eligible students passed the reading component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed reading to 76%.
- A further 13% of first-time eligible students passed the writing component of the test, bringing the total percentage of students who passed writing to 85%.
- The pattern of results for October 2002 is similar to the pattern for February 2002.
- More students were successful in the writing component than in the reading component.

Key Messages

- Teachers are making reading and writing a high priority, and their efforts appear to be showing results. A continued focus on reading skill development is necessary.
- The Ministry of Education has given attention to supporting schools and boards to help students meet the clear and specific standards of the curriculum. In addition, the introduction of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course will allow unsuccessful students to build and demonstrate their reading and writing skills in alternative ways, so that they meet the literacy requirement for graduation.
- EQAO encourages schools and boards to implement programs and provide teachers with access to tools and strategies that will assist students in achieving literacy success.
- The OSSLT is a quality assurance measure that shows the extent to which Ontario students are meeting the basic literacy standard expected by the end of Grade 9 across the province.
- For those students who did not pass the reading and/or the writing component, the test is an early indication that provides the students, their parents and their teachers with some important diagnostic information to help the students improve.
- The OSSLT results should be used to improve teaching and learning, not to rank schools. Ranking provides no information about why scores are high or low, and it invites simplistic and misleading comparisons that ignore the particular circumstances affecting achievement in each school. Ranking distracts from addressing the more critical issue of how to improve learning for all students.

Key Recommendations

EQAO recommends

- that **school boards,** in consultation with their school communities, using EQAO's *Guide to School and Board Improvement Planning,* incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing board and school improvement plans for developing student literacy. Boards should implement strategies for improving student achievement in reading and writing that extend across the elementary and secondary grades and across all subject areas.
- that **schools,** in consultation with their communities, incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing school literacy improvement plans and develop curriculum-wide strategies for improving student achievement in writing and, especially, in reading.
- that **teachers** be encouraged to use EQAO's resources to assist students in preparing to write the OSSLT successfully.
- that **parents** enhance their own understanding of the reading and writing skills required for successful completion of the OSSLT and assist students in understanding the relevance and importance of literacy skills to future education and career opportunities, and in everyday life outside school.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer professional development opportunities for teachers in literacy instruction, especially in reading.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.
- that **school boards** encourage their schools to identify and share cross-curricular strategies and practices, in both elementary and secondary schools, that effectively prepare students for the OSSLT.

Results at a Glance — Previously Eligible Students

Overall Results for English-Language Students Who Were Previously Eligible to Write the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, October 2002 (publicly funded schools)

Previously Eligible Students

		October 2002	
		#	%
Exempted Students		350	
Previously Eligible Students		37 242	
Absent One or Both Days		2203	6%
Deferred		1731	5%
Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 17 075	**Passed Both Reading and Writing**	5645	33%
	Passed Reading Only	1035	6%
	Passed Writing Only	4714	28%
	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	5681	33%
Required to Pass Reading Only # = 10 385	**Passed Reading**	5310	51%
	Did Not Pass Reading	5075	49%
Required to Pass Writing Only # = 5 848	**Passed Writing**	5072	87%
	Did Not Pass Writing	776	13%

Notes:

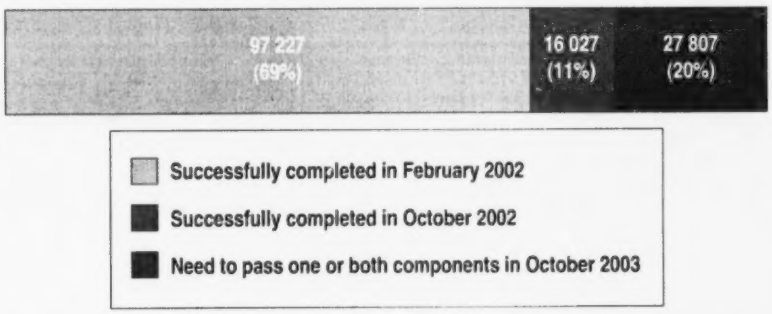
Previously eligible students entered Grade 9 during the 2000–2001 school year. These students (and others who were placed in this cohort) were required to write the OSSLT for the first time in February 2002. Students who were not successful in February 2002 or who were absent or deferred became eligible again to write the OSSLT in October 2002. Students' status is based on information provided by schools.

Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

Highlights of Achievement Results for Previously Eligible Students

- 33% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT were successful in both.
- 34% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT passed one component.
- 51% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- 87% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.

Tracking the 2001 Cohort



- After two administrations, 80% of the 2001 student cohort have successfully completed the OSSLT.

Key Messages for Previously Eligible Students

- The opportunity to retake the OSSLT has had positive results. Of the cohort of students who entered Grade 9 in September 2000 — the first group for whom the OSSLT is a graduation requirement — 80% have now been successful.
- Remediation and attention to specific areas requiring improvement appear to be contributing to positive results, especially in writing.
- Of the previously eligible students who needed to pass one component of the OSSLT, more were successful in passing the writing component than the reading component.
- The OSSLT is a quality assurance measure that shows the extent to which Ontario students, with appropriate support and a second opportunity to write the OSSLT can meet a common, basic literacy standard across the province.

Key Recommendations for Previously Eligible Students

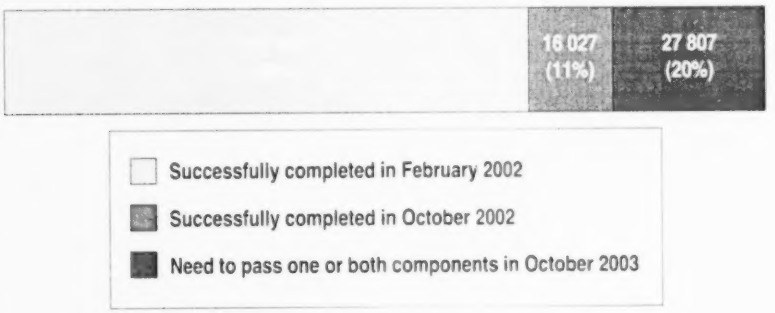
EQAO recommends

- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the new Grade 12 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.

Highlights of Achievement Results for Previously Eligible Students

- 33% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT were successful in both.
- 34% of previously eligible students who needed to pass both components of the OSSLT passed one component.
- 51% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- 87% of previously eligible students who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.

Tracking the 2001 Cohort


18 027 (11%)
27 807 (20%)
Successfully completed in February 2002
Successfully completed in October 2002
Need to pass one or both components in October 2003

- After two administrations, 80% of the 2001 student cohort have successfully completed the OSSLT.

Key Messages for Previously Eligible Students

- The opportunity to retake the OSSLT has had positive results. Of the cohort of students who entered Grade 9 in September 2000 — the first group for whom the OSSLT is a graduation requirement — 80% have now been successful.
- Remediation and attention to specific areas requiring improvement appear to be contributing to positive results, especially in writing.
- Of the previously eligible students who needed to pass one component of the OSSLT, more were successful in passing the writing component than the reading component.
- The OSSLT is a quality assurance measure that shows the extent to which Ontario students, with appropriate support and a second opportunity to write the OSSLT can meet a common, basic literacy standard across the province.

Key Recommendations for Previously Eligible Students

EQAO recommends

- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the new Grade 12 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.

- that **school boards** and **schools** study the data from the October 2002 OSSLT to review current strategies and programs for remediation.
- that **school boards** gather and share cross-curricular strategies and successful practices in remedial programs, so that students have a greater opportunity to reach the provincial standard.

Background

Introduction

The purpose of EQAO is to provide greater accountability in the publicly funded education system in Ontario and to improve the quality of education in the province. In order to fulfill its mandate, EQAO conducts several province-wide assessments, among them the OSSLT.

In 1999, the Ministry of Education established that successful completion of the OSSLT would become one of the 32 requirements for an OSSD. The OSSLT is designed to assess the reading and writing skills that students are expected to have learned across all subjects by the end of Grade 9, as outlined in *The Ontario Curriculum*.

The results of these assessments provide individual, school and school board data on student achievement. Parents receive an Individual Student Report that provides information on their child's achievement on the assessment. Schools and boards create their own reports, based on EQAO data, for distribution to parents and other stakeholders in the community. EQAO posts board and school results on its Web site (www.eqao.com) for access by the general public.

Test Design and Development

EQAO is responsible for developing and administering the OSSLT. In October 2000, a province-wide trial administration was undertaken. This assessment provided schools with an opportunity to experience first-hand what the test would be like. (The test was not a graduation requirement for this first group of students.) It also provided EQAO with an opportunity to try out administrative, marking and reporting procedures. The first full administration of the OSSLT was completed in February 2002. This report describes the achievement results for the second cohort of students for whom successful completion of the OSSLT is a diploma requirement. This report also presents results for the group of students who were previously unsuccessful on the OSSLT.

Parallel versions of the OSSLT are developed for English- and French-language schools. Although the tests contain different questions, steps are taken to support comparability between the English- and French-language versions. For example, both tests have the same number and kinds of reading selections, writing tasks and questions related to the reading selections. In addition, the French and English markers are trained in the same way, using identical scoring standards and procedures.

All aspects of the assessment, such as designing, developing, field testing, marking and reporting, are conducted by EQAO's education officers in collaboration with educators from across the province.

The test consists of two integrated components:

- A reading component
- A writing component

In the reading component, students were asked to read a total of 12 short selections, divided into three different text types:

- Information (e.g., explanation, opinion)
- Graphic (e.g., graph, schedule, instructions)
- Narrative (e.g., story, dialogue)

There were three types of questions in the reading component:

- Multiple-choice (40 questions)
- Short-answer (35 questions)
- Questions requiring an explanation (25 questions)

In the writing component, students were asked to complete four writing tasks:

- A summary
- A series of paragraphs expressing an opinion
- A news report
- An information paragraph

Setting the Standard

Standards or expectations for student achievement are expressions of acceptable or desirable levels of student performance. In some large-scale assessment programs, standards are expressed as minimum achievement scores; in others, standards are descriptions of the student performance that constitutes a minimum acceptable level of achievement. The standards created for the OSSLT are of the latter type; descriptions of student work in reading and writing were developed to describe performances that meet or exceed the minimum criteria (passed) and those that do not meet the criteria (did not pass). For further details, see the Standard-Setting Process on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com). The following descriptions provide an overview of how student performance is evaluated.

General English-Language Descriptors: Reading

Passed

The student reads with reasonable accuracy and proficiency. He or she demonstrates an understanding of directly stated information. He or she

- usually connects relevant ideas and information to understand the meaning.
- has moderate success in integrating personal knowledge and experience to extend meaning.

Did Not Pass

The student reads with limited accuracy and proficiency. He or she

- demonstrates a limited understanding of directly stated information.
- rarely connects relevant ideas and information to understand the meaning.
- has difficulty integrating personal knowledge and experience to extend meaning.

General English-Language Descriptors: Writing

Passed

The student communicates in writing. He or she

- demonstrates an ability to develop, organize and connect main ideas, with some supporting information.
- writes in a variety of forms, such as summary, opinion piece, news report and information paragraph.
- generally uses appropriate words and sentence structure.
- generally does not make errors in spelling, grammar or punctuation that impede meaning.

Did Not Pass

The student has difficulty communicating in writing. He or she

- demonstrates limited skill in developing, organizing and connecting main ideas with supporting information.
- writes in a limited variety of forms and finds it difficult to complete writing a summary, opinion piece, news report or information paragraph.
- uses inappropriate or incorrect words and sentence structure.
- makes errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation that impede meaning.

The standard was determined through a three-stage process. First, the test was field tested, and the student papers were scored by educators, using the same procedures that would be used in scoring the actual test. Second, without knowing these scores, a standard-setting committee composed of educators, experts from three Canadian universities and members of the public (including business representatives) examined the same sample of tests and organized them into acceptable and unacceptable performances. This sorting exercise was based on training provided by EQAO and other assessment experts and involved considering the degree of literacy students would need to participate in society. The training included a review of the curriculum requirements and how they relate to the test. Finally, the scores on the tests were examined to determine the pass scores that best distinguished those papers that passed from those that did not pass the test. These standards are used from one year to the next; therefore, the performance of all students in the future will be evaluated according to the same standards.

Test Administration

Consistent test administration procedures are important for ensuring fairness for all students. Schools were provided with training (principals and teachers from all French- and English-language schools are given identical training in how to administer the test) and resources (detailed written guides and instructions) to ensure that the same administrative and accommodations procedures were followed for all students across the province. These procedures are consistent with the *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada (2000)*, a document created by a collection of nationally renowned education institutions and associations and endorsed widely by education and assessment organizations.

The OSSLT was administered over two blocks of time, two-and-a-half hours each (including breaks and instructions), one on the morning of October 23 and one on the morning of October 24, 2002. Students with special needs were accommodated according to the Ministry's Policy/Program Memorandum

No. 127. Some English as a Second Language (ESL) and English Literacy Development (ELD) students were provided with special provisions described in EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions.*

Further information about elements of the OSSLT, such as preparation for the test, administration issues and standard setting, are available on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com).

Quality Assurance

Administration

Principals were asked to pay particular attention to the handling, security and confidentiality of the assessment materials, so that the conditions for the administration of the OSSLT would be consistent across the province and to ensure that the test items remained secure until the test was given to students.

Quality assurance monitors visited 90 English-language schools during the administration of the OSSLT. The sample schools visited included public, Catholic and private schools selected at random across the province.

In order to determine how consistently the test was administered, monitors were asked to examine procedures used to ensure the security of test materials before, during and after the test. Monitors reported that schools maintained tight security over the period of the test. All test materials were found to have been stored in a secure location such as the school vault or the principal's office. In all schools, individual student test materials were kept unopened in their packaging before the start of the test.

Principals reported using a wide range of approaches to create a positive attitude toward the test in their schools. Included were literacy committees, encouragement of all teachers to assume responsibility for literacy in the school, assemblies, tutors, small group meetings with students, communication with parents and a great deal of practice demonstrating the skills tested by the OSSLT.

Marking

Before the OSSLT was marked, all the student papers were scrambled. This ensured that they were distributed randomly to the markers. In addition, all the student papers went through a blind scoring process. *Blind scoring* means that there is no information on the student work that allows a marker to identify a student, a school or a school board.

Throughout the marking of the October 2002 OSSLT, EQAO took a number of steps to ensure that markers scored student papers in the same way. These steps included the use of training papers, a marker readiness test, a chain-marking method, group marking papers and double marking. Each of these steps is described in the Summary Paper on Quality Assurance Measures and Reliability and Validity Processes available on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com).

Participation of First-Time Eligible Students

First-time eligible students who participated in the October 2002 OSSLT were students who entered Grade 9 in September 2001 and were working toward an OSSD. The following table provides the number of first-time eligible students who took part in the test, as well as this number by program of study, gender and student status (e.g., ESL/ELD and special needs).

Participation in the October 2002 OSSLT

	Population	Percentage Absent One or Both Days	Percentage Deferred	Percentage Fully Participating
All First-Time Eligible Students	146 539	3%	4%	93%
Program of Study				
Academic Program	101 270	1%	1%	97%
Applied Program	34 202	5%	7%	88%
Locally Developed Program	6333	9%	23%	68%
Gender				
Female	70 675	2%	4%	94%
Male	73 999	3%	5%	92%
Student Status				
ESL/ELD	5317	1%	54%	45%
– with special provisions	1935	2%	1%	97%
Special Needs (including gifted)*	19 722	3%	9%	87%
Special Needs (excluding gifted)*	18 075	4%	10%	86%
– IEP only (with accommodations)	2825	4%	<1%	96%
– IEP and IPRC (with accommodations)	11 458	4%	<1%	96%

Program of Study

The number of first-time eligible English-language students was 146 539. Of these, 69% were in the academic program, 23% were in the applied program, 4% were in locally developed programs and 3% were unspecified. The program of study was not reported for some students. The participation of many students (23%) in the locally developed program was deferred.

Gender

Of the number of English-language students eligible to write the OSSLT for the first time, 73 999 (50%) were males, 70 675 (48%) were females and 1865 (1%) were unspecified. Gender was not reported for some students.

ESL/ELD Students

ESL students are those who arrive in Canada from another country with a first language other than English and little or no previous experience with English. Most commonly, ELD students are those who arrive in Canada from countries where English is the first language but varieties of English other than standard Canadian English are in common use.

*New information, added June 4, 2003.

Of the total number of first-time eligible students who wrote the OSSLT, the number of students enrolled in either an ESL or an ELD program was 5317 (4%). It is important to note that the participation of more than half the ESL and ELD students was deferred.

Special Provisions

Among the 5317 ESL and ELD students who were eligible to write the OSSLT for the first time, 1935 (36%) received special provisions, which included changes in setting (e.g., individual study carrel, individual or small-group setting), additional time and/or periodic supervised breaks.

The following table shows the number of ESL/ELD first-time eligible students and the percentage of the ESL/ELD total that received each of the special provisions.

Number and Percentage of First-Time Eligible ESL/ELD Students Receiving Special Provisions

	Setting of the Test	Timing	Periodic Supervised Breaks
February 2002	1201 (76%)	1539 (97%)	886 (56%)
October 2002	1180 (63%)	1856 (99%)	851 (46%)

- The total number of special provisions exceeds the total number of students who received these provisions, since many students in ESL and ELD programs needed more than one type of special provision.
- The most common special provision provided was additional time.
- Fewer ESL/ELD students received special provisions compared to last year, especially with regard to changes in setting and periodic supervised breaks.
- 39% of these students received all three types of special provision.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs are those who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), who may or may not have been identified as "exceptional pupils" by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC) and who are receiving special education programs and services (see Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 127). Of the total number of first-time eligible students, the number of students with special needs excluding gifted students was 18 075 (12%), and including gifted students, 19 722 (13%).*

Accommodations

Students receiving accommodations are those with an IEP, who may or may not have been identified as exceptional pupils by an IPRC. EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions* describes various types of accommodation, grouped under the following four broad categories:

1. Setting of the test (e.g., an individual or small-group setting in a separate location or familiar space, an individual study carrel, special lighting or adaptive equipment or technology resources such as a Kurzweil reader)
2. Timing (e.g., additional time for the test beyond the time assigned or periodic supervised breaks)

*New information, added June 4, 2003

3. Presentation format (e.g., sign language, an oral interpreter, Braille or large-print or audiotaped versions of the test)
4. Response format (e.g., audiotaping of responses to the test, verbatim scribing of responses or use of computer or word processor for responses)

A total of 14 377 (11%) participating first-time eligible students were provided with accommodations to enable them to participate fully in the OSSLT. This number includes students who were identified by an IPRC as well as students who have an IEP.

The following table shows the number and the percentage of accommodated first-time eligible students who received each type of accommodation.

Number and Percentage of Accommodated First-Time Eligible Students Receiving Each Type of Accommodation

	Setting of the Test	Timing	Different Presentation Format	Different Response Format	Other Accommodation
February 2002	11 469 (86%)	12 873 (96%)	3404 (25%)	2722 (20%)	95 (1%)
October 2002	12 145 (84%)	13 946 (97%)	4014 (28%)	3982 (28%)	119 (1%)

- Students with special needs often require two or more types of accommodation. For example, students who are blind may require Braille or large-print and may also require extra time, scribing, breaks and/or a separate location. For this reason, the total number of accommodations provided exceeds the total number of students who were accommodated.
- Most accommodated first-time eligible students were provided with between two and four accommodations.
- The most common accommodations were changes in the test setting and additional time.
- The percentages of students receiving each type of accommodation are very close to last year's percentages with the exception of response format. A higher percentage of students used a different response format this year.

Achievement Results — First-Time Eligible Students

The following table provides a summary of provincial achievement results from the October 2002 OSSLT. The table includes all students who were eligible to write the OSSLT during the 2002–2003 school year. The number of students who were exempted from participation because they were not working toward an OSSD appears in the table. Exempted students are not included in the count of eligible students, nor are they reflected in the calculation of any percentages in this or any subsequent tables.

Students can be deferred under several circumstances, as outlined in EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions.* A student is categorized as deferred only if the Student Information Form indicates a deferral and there is no work in any of the student's test booklets. If a student completes any portion of the OSSLT, he or she is not categorized as deferred.

The following tables present achievement information, including results by gender, by program (academic, applied and locally developed) as well as for ESL/ELD and special education students from the

second full administration of the OSSLT in October 2002. Clearly, some students need extra support in order to meet the provincial literacy standard. The information in these tables will help focus educators and other stakeholders on the areas in which students need to improve.

Summary of Results

		Percentage	
	Number	**Method 1**	**Method 2**
Successfully Completed the OSSLT			
Passed Both Reading and Writing	97 459	67%	72%
Wrote the OSSLT But Were Not Successful			
Passed Reading Only	5 797	4%	4%
Passed Writing Only	17 870	12%	13%
Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	14 902	10%	11%
Number Fully Participating in the OSSLT (present on both testing days)	136 028	93%	100%
Absent One or Both Days	3 991	3%	
Deferred	6 520	4%	
Total First-Time Eligible Students	146 539	100%	
Exempt	1 637		

Notes:

Percentages may not add up to 100%, due to rounding.

Method 1 provides a percentage breakdown of all students in the cohort who are working toward an OSSD. The only students excluded from the Method 1 percentages are those who were not working toward an OSSD and who were therefore exempted.

Method 2 provides a percentage breakdown of those students who fully participated in the OSSLT. Students are considered to have fully participated if they were present on both days of the administration.

Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Student Characteristic

The percentages provided for various student characteristics below are based on Method 2 (all first-time eligible students who fully participated in the OSSLT).

Results for First Time-Eligible Students by Program of Study

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
Academic Program # = 98 668	# = 83 723	# = 3256	# = 8270	# = 3419
	85%	3%	8%	3%
Applied Program # = 30 233	# = 11 426	# = 2207	# = 8177	# = 8423
	38%	7%	27%	28%
Locally Developed Program # = 4302	# = 606	# = 190	# = 992	# = 2514
	14%	4%	23%	58%

Observations:

- A large majority of first-time eligible students (85%) in the academic program successfully completed the OSSLT.
- Of those first-time eligible students in the applied program who wrote the test, 65% passed the writing component and 45% passed the reading component.
- Of those first-time eligible students in locally developed programs who wrote the test, 37% passed the writing component and 18% passed the reading component.
- Of the first-time eligible students in academic, applied and locally developed programs who wrote the test, a larger percentage of first-time eligible students passed the writing component than passed the reading component.

Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Gender

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
All First-Time Eligible Students	# = 97 459	# = 5797	# = 17 870	# = 14 902
# = 136 028	72%	4%	13%	11%
Females	# = 50 091	# = 2231	# = 8573	# = 5632
# = 66 527	75%	3%	13%	8%
Males	# = 46 581	# = 3490	# = 9077	# = 9005
# = 68 153	68%	5%	13%	13%

Observations:

- Of first-time eligible students, a larger percentage of female (75%) than male students (68%) successfully completed the OSSLT.
- Of first-time eligible students, a larger percentage of male (13%) than female students (8%) did not pass reading or writing.

Results for First-Time Eligible ESL/ELD Students

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
ESL/ELD	# = 816	# = 61	# = 659	# = 855
# = 2391	34%	3%	28%	36%

Observations:

- 62% of first-time eligible ESL/ELD students passed the writing component.
- 37% of first-time eligible ESL/ELD students passed the reading component.
- Of those first-time eligible ESL/ELD students who passed only one component, a larger percentage passed the writing component than passed the reading component.
- As previously noted, the number of ESL/ELD students eligible to write the test was 5317, of whom over half were deferred.

Note:
Results for gender are based upon the number of students for whom gender data were available.

Results for First-Time Eligible ESL/ELD Students Receiving Special Provisions

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
ESL/ELD Receiving Special Provisions	# = 678	# = 51	# = 525	# = 616
# = 1870	36%	3%	28%	33%

Observations:

- 64% of first-time eligible ESL/ELD students receiving special provisions passed the writing component.
- 39% of first-time eligible ESL/ELD students receiving special provisions passed the reading component.
- Of those first-time eligible ESL/ELD students receiving special provisions who passed only one component, a larger percentage passed the writing component than passed the reading component.

Results for First-Time Eligible Students with Special Needs*

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
Special Needs (includes gifted)	# = 7460	# = 831	# = 4018	# = 4911
# = 17 220	43%	5%	23%	29%
Special Needs (excludes gifted)	# = 5846	# = 823	# = 4015	# = 4907
# = 15 591	37%	5%	26%	31%

Observations:

- 66% of first-time eligible students with special needs (including gifted) passed the writing component.
- 63% of first-time eligible students with special needs (excluding gifted) passed the writing component.
- 48% of first-time eligible students with special needs (including gifted) passed the reading component.
- 43% of first-time eligible students with special needs (excluding gifted) passed the reading component.
- Of those first-time eligible students with special needs who passed only one component, a larger percentage passed the writing component than passed the reading component.

*New information, added June 4, 2003.

Results for First-Time Eligible Students Receiving Accommodations

	Successfully Completed the OSSLT	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing
Received Accommodations, IEP only # = 2713	# = 1051	# = 167	# = 715	# = 780
	39%	6%	26%	29%
Received Accommodations, IEP and IPRC # = 10 983	# = 4026	# = 564	# = 2905	# = 3488
	37%	5%	26%	32%

Observations:

- 65% of first-time eligible IEP students who received accommodations passed the writing component.
- 45% of first-time eligible IEP students who received accommodations passed the reading component.
- 63% of first-time eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations passed the writing component.
- 42% of first-time eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations passed the reading component.
- A larger percentage of IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations passed the writing component than passed the reading component.

Summary of Reading Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Type of Reading Selection, Reading Skill and Reading Strategy

The following table presents the mean scores of students who passed and students who did not pass, out of the total number of marks available for each selection type, reading skill and reading strategy.

Examining the mean scores gives an indication of the students' relative strengths and weaknesses in reading skills and strategies. This also provides information for planning remediation. For example, the lowest mean score — 19/50 or 38% — indicates that the reading skill in most need of improvement for unsuccessful students is "making connections between personal experiences and the ideas and information in the reading selections." This skill is also the area in which successful students were weakest.

Summary of Reading Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Reading Selection Type, Reading Skill and Reading Strategy

	Mean Score on the Reading Component for Students Who Passed Reading (# = 103 256)	Mean Score on the Reading Component for Students Who Did Not Pass Reading (# = 32 733)
Reading Selection Type		
Information (e.g., explanation, opinion)	64/90 (71%)	42/90 (47%)
Graphic (e.g., graph, schedule, instructions)	38/50 (76%)	25/50 (50%)
Narrative (e.g., story, dialogue)	45/60 (75%)	28/60 (47%)
Reading Skill		
Understands directly stated ideas and information	47/60 (78%)	33/60 (55%)
Understands indirectly stated ideas and information	68/90 (76%)	43/90 (48%)
Makes connections between personal experiences and the ideas and information in the reading selections	32/50 (64%)	19/50 (38%)
Reading Strategy		
Vocabulary	22/30 (73%)	15/30 (50%)
Syntax	20/30 (67%)	13/30 (43%)
Organization	24/36 (67%)	15/36 (42%)
Graphic features	17/24 (71%)	10/24 (42%)

Observations:

- The pattern of strengths and weaknesses in reading skills is similar for successful and unsuccessful students.
- Students performed slightly better in reading graphic selections, but not significantly more so, than in reading other types of reading selections.
- All students, successful and unsuccessful, had most success in demonstrating the skill of understanding directly stated ideas and information.
- Successful students demonstrated the skill of understanding directly stated ideas and information and the skill of understanding indirectly stated ideas and information almost equally well.
- Unsuccessful students were weak in all three reading skills, especially in understanding indirectly stated ideas and information (48%) and making connections between personal experience and ideas and information in the reading selection (38%).
- Students who were unsuccessful in the reading component showed weakness in all reading strategies.

Note:

This table contains data for students who did not use a large-print or audiotaped version of the OSSLT. The Individual Student Report (ISR) shows the results for each reading skill for each selection type and can assist in the remediation of individual students. The small sample size in some schools prevents accurate reporting at the school level of results in reading by the reading selection types, reading skill and reading strategy.

Summary of Writing Results for First-Time Eligible Students by Writing Task

The following tables contain data on all students who wrote the writing component of the OSSLT. The tables describe student performance according to the columns used in the holistic scoring rubrics. Refer to EQAO's Web site (www.eqao.com) for further information about scoring rubrics.

Summary

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 136 028)
Blank/Illegible	8%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	8%
Column 1	3%
Column 2	18%
Column 3	40%
Column 4	23%

Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 136 028)
Blank/Illegible	2%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	5%
Column 1	<1%
Column 2	15%
Column 3	55%
Column 4	23%

News Report

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 136 028)
Blank/Illegible	2%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	2%
Column 1	<1%
Column 2	8%
Column 3	56%
Column 4	31%

Information Paragraph

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 136 028)
Blank/Illegible	3%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	10%
Column 1	1%
Column 2	17%
Column 3	52%
Column 4	17%

Overall Observations

- The majority of students reached Column 3 in all four writing tasks.
- Students showed various degrees of proficiency across the four writing tasks. They were most proficient in writing the news report and least proficient in writing the summary.
- There were fewer Column 4 information paragraph responses than Column 4 responses to other writing tasks. Since coherent organization is a key factor distinguishing Column 4 from Column 3, this indicates that students are finding it a challenge to organize information into a single paragraph.
- Many student responses were blank or were non-compliant. The highest incidence of blank responses was in the summary. The highest incidence of non-compliancy was in the information paragraph. A blank or non-compliant response in one writing task significantly reduced a student's chance of success in the writing component of the OSSLT.

Detailed Analytic Writing Results for First-Time Eligible Students Who Did Not Pass Writing

The following tables contain data on all students who wrote the writing component of the OSSLT. The tables describe student performance according to the rubrics used in analytic scoring.

Summary

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 13 919)
Main Idea	**Not from original**	8%
	Inaccurate	55%
	Accurate	37%
Supporting Details	**None or not from original**	18%
	One detail or details unrelated to main idea	28%
	Two details from original	20%
	Two details related to main idea	33%
Organization	**Insufficient evidence to report**	8%
	Random	6%
	Inconsistent	23%
	Simple	56%
	Coherent	7%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	**Insufficient evidence to report**	8%
	Errors confuse	6%
	Errors distract	20%
	Errors do not distract	34%
	Few errors	32%

Note:

Students who used a scribe or a word processor and students whose responses were audiotaped and then transcribed are not included in spelling, grammar and punctuation. This explains any differences between the insufficient evidence to report percentages under one task.

Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 18 876)
Main Idea	No opinion on topic	6%
	Unclear or inconsistent opinion	29%
	Clear	65%
Supporting Details	None	5%
	Insufficient	28%
	Sufficient	43%
	Substantial	25%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	38%
	Random	1%
	Inconsistent	20%
	Simple	30%
	Coherent	10%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	38%
	Errors confuse	2%
	Errors distract	14%
	Errors do not distract	27%
	Few errors	20%

News Report

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 18 319)
Main Idea	Report not focused	9%
	Report partly focused	13%
	Report focused	78%
Supporting Details	None	6%
	Insufficient	37%
	Sufficient	52%
	Substantial	5%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	28%
	Random	2%
	Inconsistent	12%
	Simple	52%
	Coherent	6%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	27%
	Errors confuse	3%
	Errors distract	20%
	Errors do not distract	34%
	Few errors	16%

Information Paragraph

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 17 365)
Main Idea	None	48%
	More than one	12%
	Unstated focus	19%
	Stated focus	21%
Supporting Details	Unrelated	48%
	Insufficient	24%
	Sufficient	28%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	2%
	Random	30%
	Inconsistent	54%
	Simple	11%
	Coherent	3%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	2%
	Errors confuse	4%
	Errors distract	14%
	Errors do not distract	32%
	Few errors	48%

Overall Observations:

- Most unsuccessful students were successful in focusing on one event for the news report. However, most unsuccessful students did not identify the main idea of the original summary text with accuracy, and approximately three-quarters of unsuccessful students did not clearly identify one aspect of the topic as the focus of the information paragraph.
- For the summary, news report and information paragraph, many unsuccessful students did not provide a sufficient number of supporting details to develop the main idea.
- While the majority of the unsuccessful students expressed an opinion, many of them did not present their opinion clearly or consistently throughout the series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.
- The responses of many unsuccessful students were too short to provide detailed feedback in organization and spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Results from the Student Questionnaire — First-Time Eligible Students

Response Rate

First-Time Eligible Students	Completed Questionnaires	Response Rate
146 539	143 948	98%

Student Computer Use, Language and Background

Percentage of first-time eligible students indicating that	Females (# = 69 981)	Males (# = 72 000)
– they have a computer at home	92%	90%
– English is the first language that they learned at home	77%	76%
– English is the language spoken most frequently at home	76%	75%
– they were born outside Canada	19%	20%

Observations:

- There were no significant differences in the above contextual information for male and female first-time eligible students.
- A high percentage of both males and females reported that they have access to a computer at home.

Reading and Writing Outside School

Percentage of first-time eligible students indicating that	Females (# = 69 981)	Males (# = 72 000)
– they read English outside school for three or more hours a week (not counting homework)	40%	33%
– they read the following kinds of material outside school most weeks:		
biographies or other non-fiction books	20%	18%
comics	28%	35%
Internet material	80%	74%
letters	44%	17%
magazines	81%	64%
manuals, instructions	10%	25%
newspapers	44%	50%
novels, fiction, short stories	64%	42%
poetry, song lyrics	47%	22%
religious or spiritual readings	14%	11%
– they write in English outside school for three or more hours a week (not counting homework)	34%	25%
– they do the following types of writing outside school most weeks:		
e-mail messages, chat-room conversations	88%	82%
letters, journals, diaries	58%	11%
notes, directions, instructions	46%	28%
song lyrics, poems	32%	19%
stories, fiction	15%	11%
work-related writing	21%	22%

Observations:

- The majority of first-time eligible students (59% of females and 66% of males) indicated they do not read outside school for more than three hours a week. This was also true for writing: the majority of first-time eligible students (65% of females and 74% of males) indicated they do not write outside school for more than three hours a week.
- A higher percentage of female first-time eligible students than male first-time eligible students indicated they read and write outside school for three or more hours a week.
- Females most often select magazines, Internet materials, novels, fiction and short stories when they read outside school. Males most often select Internet material and magazines when they read outside school.

- Females most often select e-mail messages, chat-room conversations, letters, journals and diaries when they write outside school.
- Males most often select e-mail messages and chat-room conversations when they write outside school.
- A higher number of male students than female students select comics, newspapers, manuals and instructions to read outside school.
- A higher percentage of female students than male students select Internet material, letters, magazines, novels, fiction, short stories, poetry and song lyrics to read outside school.
- More female students than male students select e-mail messages, chat-room conversations, letters, journals, diaries, notes, directions, instructions, song lyrics and poems when they write outside school.

Participation of Previously Eligible Students

Previously eligible students are those who entered Grade 9 in September 2000 and were first eligible to participate in February 2002 (originally October 2001, moved to February 2002 due to the cancellation of the October administration). Previously eligible students are those who were deferred, absent or unsuccessful at that time. The following table provides the number of previously eligible students who took part in the test as well as this number by gender, by ESL/ELD and by special needs.

Participation in the October 2002 OSSLT

	Population	Percentage Absent One or Both Days	Percentage Deferred	Percentage Fully Participating
All Previously Eligible Students	37 242	6%	5%	89%
Gender				
Female	14 776	6%	4%	90%
Male	21 989	6%	5%	89%
Student Status				
ESL/ELD	1935	3%	34%	64%
- with special provisions	927	3%	<1%	96%
Special Needs (including gifted)*	10 817	5%	6%	89%
Special Needs (excluding gifted)*	10 769	5%	6%	89%
- IEP only (with accommodations)	1916	4%	<1%	96%
- IEP and IPRC (with accommodations)	7079	5%	<1%	95%

*New information, added June 4, 2003.

Gender

The number of previously eligible English-language students who participated in the OSSLT was 37 242. Of these, 21 989 (59%) were males, 14 776 (40%) were females and 477 (1%) were unspecified. Gender was not reported for some students.

ESL/ELD Students

ESL students are those who arrive in Canada from another country with a first language other than English and little or no previous experience with English. Most commonly, ELD students are those who arrive in Canada from countries where English is the first language but varieties of English other than standard Canadian English are in common use.

Of the total number of previously eligible students who wrote the OSSLT, the number of students enrolled in either an ESL or an ELD program was 1935 (5%). The participation of many of the ESL and ELD students (34%) was deferred.

Special Provisions

Of the 1935 previously eligible ESL and ELD students, 927 (48%) received special provisions, which included changes in setting (e.g., individual study carrel, individual or small-group setting), additional time and/or periodic supervised breaks.

The following table shows the number of previously eligible ESL/ELD students and the percentage of the ESL/ELD total that received each of the special provisions.

Number and Percentage of Previously Eligible ESL/ELD Students Receiving Special Provisions

Setting of the Test	Timing	Periodic Supervised Breaks
601 (67%)	882 (98%)	405 (45%)

- The total number of special provisions exceeds the total number of students who received these provisions, since many students in ESL and ELD programs needed more than one type of special provision.
- The most common special provision was additional time.
- Of these students, 40% received all three special provisions.

Students with Special Needs

Students with special needs are those who have an IEP, those who may or may not have been identified as "exceptional pupils" by an IPRC and those who are receiving special education programs and services (see Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 127). Of the total number of previously eligible students, the number of students with special needs excluding gifted students was 10 769 (29%), and including gifted students, 10 817 (29%).*

*New information, added June 4, 2003.

Accommodations

Students receiving accommodations are those with an IEP who may or may not have been identified as "exceptional pupils" by an IPRC. EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions* describes various types of accommodations, grouped under the following four broad categories:

1. Setting of the test (e.g., an individual or small-group setting in a separate location or familiar space, an individual study carrel, special lighting or adaptive equipment or technology resources, such as a Kurzweil reader)
2. Timing (e.g., additional time for the test beyond the time assigned or periodic supervised breaks)
3. Presentation format (e.g., sign language, an oral interpreter, Braille, or large-print or audiotaped versions of the test)
4. Response format (e.g., audiotaping of responses to the test, verbatim scribing of responses or use of computer or word processor for responses)

A total of 8881 previously eligible students (27%) were provided with various types of accommodations to enable them to participate fully in the OSSLT. This number includes students who were identified by an IPRC as well as students who have an IEP.

The following table shows the number and the percentage of accommodated previously eligible students who received each type of accommodation.

Number and Percentage of Accommodated Previously Eligible Students Receiving Each Type of Accommodation

Setting of the Test	Timing	Presentation Format	Response Format	Other Accommodation
7557 (85%)	8634 (97%)	2934 (33%)	2231 (25%)	88 (1%)

- Students with special needs often require two or more types of accommodation. For example, students who are blind may require Braille or large-print and may also require extra time, scribing, breaks and/or a separate location. For this reason, the total number of accommodations provided exceeds the total number of students who were accommodated.
- Most accommodated previously eligible students were provided with between two and four accommodations.
- The most common accommodations were changes in the test setting and additional time.

Achievement Results — Previously Eligible Students

The following tables provide a summary of provincial achievement results from the October 2002 OSSLT. The table includes those students who were previously eligible to write the OSSLT during 2001–2002 but were deferred or unsuccessful at that time. The number of students who were exempted from participation because they were not working toward an OSSD also appears in the tables. Exempted students are not included in the count of previously eligible students nor are they reflected in the calculation of any percentages in this or any subsequent table.

Students can be deferred under several circumstances, as outlined in EQAO's *Guide for Accommodations, Special Provisions, Deferrals and Exemptions.* A student is categorized as deferred only if the Student Information Form indicates a deferral and there is no work in any of the student's test booklets. If a student completes any portion of the OSSLT, he or she is not categorized as deferred.

The following tables present achievement information, including results by gender, for ESL/ELD and special education students for the second full administration of the OSSLT in October 2002. Achievement information is organized according to the component or components of the test that the students were required to successfully complete.

Summary of Results

		October 2002	
		#	%
Exempt Students		350	
Previously Eligible Students		37 242	
Absent One or Both Days		2203	6%
Deferred		1731	5%
Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 17 075	**Passed Both Reading and Writing**	5645	33%
	Passed Reading Only	1035	6%
	Passed Writing Only	4714	28%
	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	5681	33%
Required to Pass Reading Only # = 10 385	**Passed Reading**	5310	51%
	Did Not Pass Reading	5075	49%
Required to Pass Writing Only # = 5848	**Passed Writing**	5072	87%
	Did Not Pass Writing	776	13%

Results for Previously Eligible Students by Student Characteristic

The percentages for various student characteristics below are based on Method 2 (all previously eligible students who fully participated in the OSSLT).

Results for Previously Eligible Students by Gender

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 17 075				Required to Pass Reading Only # = 10 385		Required to Pass Writing Only # = 5848	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
All Previously Eligible Students # = 33 308	# = 5645	# = 1035	# = 4714	# = 5681	# = 5310	# = 5075	# = 5072	# = 776
	33%	6%	28%	33%	51%	49%	87%	13%

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 6668				Required to Pass Reading Only # = 4651		Required to Pass Writing Only # = 1999	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
Females # = 13 318	# = 2347	# = 326	# = 1990	# = 2005	# = 2231	# = 2420	# = 1756	# = 243
	35%	5%	30%	30%	48%	52%	88%	12%

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 10 188				Required to Pass Reading Only # = 5634		Required to Pass Writing Only # = 3780	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
Males # = 19 602	# = 3226	# = 695	# = 2672	# = 3595	# = 3029	# = 2605	# = 3255	# = 525
	32%	7%	26%	35%	54%	46%	86%	14%

Observations:

- Of those students who needed to pass both components of the test, 35% of female students and 32% of male students did pass both components.
- 35% of female students and 33% of male students who needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- 48% of female students and over half (54%) of male students who were required to pass reading only, did pass reading.
- 88% of female students and 86% of male students who were required to pass writing only, did pass writing.
- More students who needed to pass writing were successful than those who needed to pass reading.

Results for Previously Eligible ESL/ELD Students

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing				Required to Pass Reading Only		Required to Pass Writing only	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
ESL/ELD	25%	3%	34%	38%	47%	53%	85%	15%

Observations:

- 25% of ESL/ELD students who needed to pass the two components did pass both components.
- 37% of ESL/ELD students who needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- 47% of ESL/ELD students who needed to pass only the reading component did pass reading.
- 85% of ESL/ELD students who needed to pass only the writing component did pass writing.

Note:
Total counts have been suppressed to protect student confidentiality where numbers are low.

Results for Previously Eligible ESL/ELD Students Receiving Special Provisions

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing				Required to Pass Reading Only		Required to Pass Writing Only	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
ESL/ELD Receiving Special Provisions	26%	3%	37%	34%	50%	50%	85%	15%

Observations:

- 26% of ESL/ELD students who received special provisions and needed to pass the two components did pass both components.
- 40% of ESL/ELD students who received special provisions and needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- Half (50%) of ESL/ELD students who received special provisions and needed to pass the reading component did pass reading.
- 85% of ESL/ELD students who received special provisions and needed to pass the writing component did pass writing.

Note:
Total counts have been suppressed to protect student confidentiality where numbers are low.

Results for Previously Eligible Students with Special Needs*

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # including gifted = 5663 # excluding gifted = 5624				Required to Pass Reading Only # including gifted = 2958 # excluding gifted = 2955		Required to Pass Writing only # including gifted = 956 # excluding gifted = 952	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
Special Needs (includes gifted)	# = 1317	# = 311	# = 1634	# = 2401	# = 1252	# = 1706	# = 794	# = 162
# = 9577	23%	5%	29%	42%	42%	58%	83%	17%
Special Needs (excludes gifted)	# = 1280	# = 310	# = 1633	# = 2401	# = 1249	# = 1706	# = 790	# = 162
# = 9531	23%	6%	29%	43%	42%	58%	83%	17%

Observations:

- 23% of students with special needs (including gifted) who needed to pass the two components did pass both components.
- 23% of students with special needs (excluding gifted) who needed to pass the two components did pass both components.
- 34% of students with special needs (including gifted) who needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- 35% of students with special needs (excluding gifted) who needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- 42% of students with special needs (including gifted) who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- 42% of students with special needs (excluding gifted) who needed to pass only reading did pass reading.
- 83% of students with special needs (including gifted) who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.
- 83% of students with special needs (excluding gifted) who needed to pass only writing did pass writing.

*New information, added June 4, 2003.

Results for Previously Eligible Students Receiving Accommodations

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 1012				Required to Pass Reading Only # = 594		Required to Pass Writing Only # = 232	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
Receiving Accommodations, IEP only # = 1838	# = 325	# = 64	# = 301	# = 322	# = 297	# = 297	# = 203	# = 29
	32%	6%	30%	32%	50%	50%	88%	13%

	Required to Pass Both Reading and Writing # = 3966				Required to Pass Reading Only # = 2103		Required to Pass Writing only # = 621	
	Passed Both Reading and Writing	Passed Reading Only	Passed Writing Only	Did Not Pass Reading or Writing	Passed Reading	Did Not Pass Reading	Passed Writing	Did Not Pass Writing
Receiving Accommodations, IEP and IPRC # = 6690	# = 852	# = 207	# = 1190	# = 1717	# = 854	# = 1249	# = 514	# = 107
	21%	5%	30%	43%	41%	59%	83%	17%

Observations:

- 32% of previously eligible IEP students and 21% of previously eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations and needed to pass the two components did pass both components.
- 36% of previously eligible IEP students and 35% of previously eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations and needed to pass the two components passed one of the two components.
- Half the previously eligible IEP students and 41% of the previously eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations and needed to pass the reading component did pass reading.
- 88% of the previously eligible IEP students and 83% of the previously eligible IEP and IPRC students who received accommodations and needed to pass the writing component did pass writing.

Summary of Reading Results for Previously Eligible Students by Reading Selection Type, Reading Skill and Reading Strategy

The following table presents the mean number of marks scored by students who passed and students who did not pass, out of the total number of marks available for each selection type, reading skill and reading strategy.

Examining the mean scores gives an indication of the students' relative strengths and weaknesses in reading skills and strategies. This also provides information for planning remediation. For example, the lowest mean score — 18/50 or 36% — indicates that the reading skill in most need of improvement for unsuccessful students is "making connections between personal experiences and the ideas and information in the reading selections." This skill is also the area in which successful students were weakest.

	Mean Score on the Reading Component for Students Who Passed Reading (# = 11 990)	**Mean Score on the Reading Component for Students Who Did Not Pass Reading** (# = 15 453)
Reading Selection Type		
Information (e.g., explanation, opinion)	59/90 (66%)	41/90 (46%)
Graphic (e.g., graph, schedule, instructions)	35/50 (70%)	25/50 (50%)
Narrative (e.g., story, dialogue)	41/60 (68%)	28/60 (47%)
Reading Skill		
Understands directly stated ideas and information	44/60 (73%)	33/60 (55%)
Understands indirectly stated ideas and information	62/90 (69%)	43/90 (48%)
Makes connections between personal experiences and the ideas and information in the reading selections	29/50 (58%)	18/50 (36%)
Reading Strategy		
Vocabulary	20/30 (67%)	14/30 (47%)
Syntax	18/30 (60%)	12/30 (40%)
Organization	22/36 (61%)	15/36 (42%)
Graphic features	16/24 (67%)	10/24 (42%)

Observations:

- The pattern of strengths and weaknesses in the skills of previously eligible students is similar to that of first-time eligible students.
- The mean scores of previously eligible students who were not successful on their second attempt at the OSSLT are very similar to the scores of unsuccessful first-time eligible students.
- The mean scores for students who passed the OSSLT on their second attempt show that their skills have improved enough to pass but are still not strong.

Summary of Writing Results for Previously Eligible Students by Writing Task

The following tables contain data on all students who wrote the writing component of the OSSLT. The tables describe the student performance according to the columns used in the holistic scoring rubrics. Refer to EQAO's Web site (www.eqao.com) for further information about scoring rubrics.

Summary

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 33 308)
Blank/Illegible	19%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	8%
Column 1	4%
Column 2	22%
Column 3	34%
Column 4	12%

Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 33 308)
Blank/Illegible	11%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	10%
Column 1	1%
Column 2	22%
Column 3	47%
Column 4	9%

News Report

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 33 308)
Blank/Illegible	14%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	3%
Column 1	<1%
Column 2	14%
Column 3	53%
Column 4	15%

Information Paragraph

	Percentage of Students by Performance on Writing Task (# = 33 308)
Blank/Illegible	15%
Irrelevant Content/Non-Compliant	13%
Column 1	1%
Column 2	22%
Column 3	41%
Column 4	8%

Observations:

- The pattern of results of the previously eligible students on all writing tasks is similar to that of the first-time eligible students.
- For previously eligible students, there were many more blank responses and fewer Column 4s in all writing tasks than for first-time eligible students.

Detailed Analytic Writing Results for Previously Eligible Students Who Did Not Pass Writing

The following tables contain data on all students who wrote the writing component of the OSSLT. The tables describe student performance according to the rubrics used in analytic scoring.

Summary

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 4881)
Main Idea	Not from original	9%
	Inaccurate	53%
	Accurate	37%
Supporting Details	None or not from original	21%
	One detail or details unrelated to main idea	29%
	Two details from original	19%
	Two details related to main idea	31%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	8%
	Random	7%
	Inconsistent	24%
	Simple	55%
	Coherent	6%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	9%
	Errors confuse	8%
	Errors distract	22%
	Errors do not distract	33%
	Few errors	29%

Series of Paragraphs Expressing an Opinion

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 6595)
Main Idea	No opinion on topic	7%
	Unclear or inconsistent opinion	29%
	Clear	65%
Supporting Details	None	5%
	Insufficient	31%
	Sufficient	42%
	Substantial	22%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	43%
	Random	1%
	Inconsistent	20%
	Simple	29%
	Coherent	7%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	42%
	Errors confuse	3%
	Errors distract	15%
	Errors do not distract	25%
	Few errors	15%

News Report

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 6353)
Main Idea	Report not focused	10%
	Report partly focused	14%
	Report focused	77%
Supporting Details	None	7%
	Insufficient	39%
	Sufficient	50%
	Substantial	4%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	29%
	Random	2%
	Inconsistent	14%
	Simple	51%
	Coherent	4%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	29%
	Errors confuse	4%
	Errors distract	24%
	Errors do not distract	32%
	Few errors	12%

Information Paragraph

Characteristic	Feedback Comments	Percentage (# = 6016)
Main Idea	None	49%
	More than one	11%
	Unstated focus	19%
	Stated focus	21%
Supporting Details	Unrelated	49%
	Insufficient	24%
	Sufficient	27%
Organization	Insufficient evidence to report	3%
	Random	32%
	Inconsistent	53%
	Simple	10%
	Coherent	2%
Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation	Insufficient evidence to report	3%
	Errors confuse	5%
	Errors distract	17%
	Errors do not distract	32%
	Few errors	43%

Overall Observations:

- Most unsuccessful students were successful in focusing on one event for the news report. However, most unsuccessful students did not identify the main idea of the original summary text with accuracy, and approximately three-quarters of unsuccessful students did not clearly identify one aspect of the topic as the focus of the information paragraph.
- For the summary, news report and information paragraph, many unsuccessful students did not provide a sufficient number of supporting details to develop the main idea.
- While the majority of the unsuccessful students expressed an opinion, many of them did not present their opinion clearly or consistently throughout the series of paragraphs expressing an opinion.
- The responses of many unsuccessful students were too short to provide detailed feedback in organization and spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Results from the Student Questionnaire — Previously Eligible Students

Response Rate

Previously Eligible Students	Completed Questionnaires	Response Rate
37 242	34 844	94%

Student Computer Use, Language and Background

Percentage of previously eligible students indicating that	Females (# = 13 969)	Males (# = 20 465)
– they have a computer at home	84%	82%
– English is the first language that they learned at home	67%	70%
– English is the language spoken most frequently at home	65%	67%
– they were born outside Canada	29%	26%

Observations:

- There were no significant differences in the above contextual information for male and female previously eligible students.
- A high percentage of both males and females reported that they have access to a computer at home.

Reading and Writing Outside School

Percentage of previously eligible students indicating that	Females (# = 13 969)	Males (# = 20 465)
– they read English outside school for three or more hours a week (not counting homework)	26%	24%
– they read the following kinds of material outside school most weeks:		
biographies or other non-fiction books	20%	15%
comics	22%	31%
Internet material	69%	63%
letters	53%	23%
magazines	79%	64%
manuals, instructions	11%	24%
newspapers	47%	49%
novels, fiction, short stories	51%	28%
poetry, song lyrics	48%	24%
religious or spiritual readings	14%	10%
– they write in English outside school for three or more hours a week (not counting homework)	28%	23%
– they do the following types of writing outside school most weeks:		
e-mail messages, chat-room conversations	79%	73%
letters, journals, diaries	59%	14%
notes, directions, instructions	43%	27%
song lyrics, poems	34%	22%
stories, fiction	13%	9%
work-related writing	25%	24%

Observations:

- A higher percentage of female than male previously eligible students indicated that they read and write outside school for three or more hours a week.
- The majority of previously eligible students (72% of females and 74% of males) indicated that they do not read outside school for more than three hours a week. This was also true for writing: the majority of previously eligible students (69% of females and 74% of males) indicated that they do not write outside school for more than three hours a week.
- Females and males most often select magazines and Internet materials when they read outside school.
- Previously eligible females and males most often select e-mail messages and chat-room conversations when they write outside school; females also indicated that they write letters, journals or diaries.

- Male students most often select magazines, Internet material and newspapers when they read outside school.
- A higher percentage of female students than male students indicated they read biographies or other non-fiction books, Internet material, letters, magazines, novels, fiction, short stories, poetry and song lyrics.
- More female students than male students indicated that they write e-mail messages, chat-room conversations, letters, journals, diaries, notes, directions, instructions, song lyrics and poems when they write outside school.

Specific Recommendations

Since EQAO's release of the February 2002 OSSLT results last fall, school boards and other stakeholders have just begun to implement plans for improvement. Consequently, many of the recommendations made at that time remain relevant and are repeated in this report where data are consistent with those of February 2002.

Planning for Improvement

EQAO recommends

- that **school boards,** in consultation with their school communities, and using EQAO's *Guide to School and Board Improvement Planning*, incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing board and school improvement plans for developing student literacy. Boards should implement strategies for improving student achievement in reading and writing that extend across the elementary and secondary grades and across all subject areas.
- that **schools,** in consultation with their communities, incorporate the overall and specific data from the October 2002 OSSLT into their existing school literacy improvement plans and develop curriculum-wide strategies for improving student achievement in writing and, especially, in reading.

Relevance and Student Motivation

EQAO recommends

- that the **Ministry, school boards, principals** and **teachers,** in partnership with students, parents and school councils, take further steps to help students understand the relevance of literacy to learning in all subject areas, and the importance of literacy skills to future education opportunities, career opportunities and everyday life outside school.
- that **parents** enhance their own understanding of the reading and writing skills required for successful completion of the OSSLT and assist students in understanding the relevance and importance of literacy skills to future education and career opportunities and everyday life outside school.
- that the **Ministry, school boards, principals** and **teachers,** recognizing the strong connection between literacy and the use of technology, develop strategies students can use in school and at home when using computers, that will enhance student achievement in reading and writing (e.g., thoughtful use of spell and grammar checkers and the use of the "Find" function to track significant words in a reading selection).

Reading

EQAO recommends

- that **principals and teachers,** in consultation with students, parents and school councils, review the Student Questionnaire data for students in their school and determine how students' home reading can be used to encourage students to develop more effective reading strategies, increased reading comprehension and a greater enjoyment of reading.
- that **school boards** and **schools** carefully study the data on reading strategies to determine whether students in their jurisdictions are having particular difficulty with reading questions related to each of the four reading strategies, and have teachers in all subject areas assist students in developing an understanding of how these strategies are used to increase reading comprehension.
- that **school boards, principals** and **teachers,** in consultation with students, parents and school councils, examine the data on reading and writing achievement in order to identify subjects and/or courses in which additional emphasis on reading and writing skills is required.
- that **school boards** access available new funding from the Ministry to develop and provide remedial literacy programs that help students improve their reading and writing skills.
- that **teachers** use the Annotated Student Responses on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com) to help students understand the skills and strategies that contribute to success in reading as assessed by the OSSLT.
- that **teachers** use the OSSLT Curriculum Connections to identify cross-curricular and cross-grade opportunities for students to learn and practise the reading skills and strategies assessed by the OSSLT.

Writing

EQAO recommends

- that **teachers** use the Annotated Student Responses on the EQAO Web site (www.eqao.com) to help students understand the characteristics of successful writing as assessed by the OSSLT.
- that **teachers** use the OSSLT Curriculum Connections to identify cross-curricular and cross-grade opportunities for students to learn and practise the writing tasks, especially the summary, and the strategies assessed by the OSSLT.

Support for Teachers

EQAO recommends

- that **Faculties of Education** strongly consider the recommendation from the Final Report of the At-Risk Working Group (January 2003) to include, in pre-service training, modules on literacy instruction and related classroom assessment for all teacher candidates.
- that the **Ontario College of Teachers** include a compulsory course on reading skill acquisition and development as a requirement of the Professional Learning Program.
- that the **Ontario College of Teachers** strongly consider the recommendation from the Final Report of the At-Risk Working Group that literacy and classroom assessment modules be integrated into all Additional Qualifications courses, so that this training can be linked to every subject area.
- that **school boards** and **schools** offer professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of literacy instruction, especially in reading.

- that **teachers** be encouraged to use the Support Materials, Annotated Student Responses, Example Test Booklet and Getting Ready Guide, available and updated on EQAO's Web site (www.eqao.com), to help students prepare to write the OSSLT successfully (e.g., to understand the format of the test, the number and kinds of reading questions and writing tasks, the time constraints, the need to respond to all reading questions and writing tasks, the need to write on the topic and to follow the instructions provided for all writing tasks, and how the test is marked).

Support for Parents/Guardians

EQAO recommends

- that **parents** be encouraged to use How to Prepare Your Child for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, the Support Materials, Annotated Student Responses, Example Test Booklet and the Getting Ready Guide, available and updated on EQAO's Web site (www.eqao.com), to help their child prepare to write the OSSLT successfully (e.g., to understand the format of the test, the number and kinds of reading questions and writing tasks, the time constraints, the need to respond to all reading questions and writing tasks, the need to write on the topic and to follow the instructions provided for all writing tasks, and how the test is marked).

Diverse Student Populations

EQAO recommends

- that **school boards, principals** and **teachers** examine the data for applied and locally developed courses and ensure that the strategies and resources being used to teach and assess these courses appropriately reflect their focus, the provincial curriculum expectations for applied and locally developed courses and the needs and motivation of students, with emphasis on the reading and writing skills measured by the OSSLT.
- that **school boards, principals** and **teachers**, in consultation with students, parents and school councils, review the achievement and questionnaire data for students in all course types and determine what additional steps need to be taken in order to increase the percentage of students reaching the provincial standard in reading and writing on the OSSLT.
- that **school boards**, in consultation with parents, students and school councils, monitor the achievement of ESL and ELD students on the OSSLT, implement a variety of strategies for assisting students in these programs to be successful on the OSSLT and ensure that these students have a maximum number of opportunities to participate in the OSSLT.
- that **school boards,** in consultation with parents, students and school councils, monitor the achievement of students in special education courses on the OSSLT and implement a variety of strategies for assisting students in these programs to be successful on the OSSLT.

Previously Eligible Students

EQAO recommends

- that **school boards** and **schools** offer proven remedial programs or courses, including the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), to students who have not successfully completed the OSSLT.
- that **school boards** and **schools** study the data from the October 2002 OSSLT to review current strategies and programs for remediation.
- that **school boards** gather and share cross-curricular strategies and successful practices in remedial programs, so that students have a greater opportunity to reach the provincial standard.
- that **school boards** and **schools,** in consultation with parents, students and school councils, monitor the achievement of students who have been unsuccessful on the OSSLT and implement a variety of strategies for assisting students in remedial programs to be successful on the OSSLT.